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PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

PRAGMATISM AND METAPHYSICS

"One can not have his metaphysics and eat it too."

AT the recent meeting of the Western Philosophical Association,¹ the symposium, which had been arranged for the principal session, was given to consideration of immortality, the natural world and God from the three standpoints of idealism, realism, and pragmatism. The questions formally propounded, it is true, were not quite as bold and direct as this statement might imply, being these: (1) In what sense does the human person possess independence of his physical organism and environment? (2) What reality has the history of the world as the physical and biological sciences present it? and (3) Does any being exist that plays the part assigned to God in theistic religion? But the actual discussion was by no means confined to such specific inquiries. The actual discussion, moreover, was nearer to being just one more trial of pragmatism at the court of metaphysics than any mere weighing of the relative merits of the three "isms" represented. Certainly there was no keen interest in any of the issues merely between idealism and realism; these two eminently respectable old-timers showed little if any of their earlier animus towards each other; rather did they seem to be in a dual—or should the philosopher say dualistic?—alliance against the *nouveau vrai* upstart, pragmatism. What matters it after all, exclaimed one of the idealists, perhaps in an unguarded moment, perhaps really not caring, whether we call the objects of experience ideas or things? suggesting, of course, that more serious problems may now be confronting us. And a realist and materialist was equally indifferent in that his "isms" were so critical, so free from naïveté, as to enable him to admit, if not insist, that although the material world, the world of science, can be our only world, nevertheless not any science nor even all the sciences can ever exhaust the nature of that world. From which one can conclude only that the real and material world, however revealed through science, is also transcendent, of course immanently transcendent, of science or of matter

¹ Held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, April 6-7, 1917.

as represented by science and so is itself other than a world of things, being—as proved to be the case—in its own natural right also a world of mind. But a query: Might not an idealist, if waxing sufficiently critical in his turn, as confidently find his ideas to be really, albeit not openly, but only immanently, also things, and so, fully cooperating with our realist and having indeed no serious difference with him, help once more to point the moral of it all that whether things or ideas, matter or mind, is no longer the significant question?

But, to recall a phrase from above, pragmatism on trial at the court of metaphysics might well be said to be pragmatism tested by dualism or by monism, idealistic or materialistic or indifferentistic; and just from this point of view the recent symposium had special interest for the writer, suggesting such reflections as follow. Thus, only to give direction to the present report of these reflections, there is this question: Pragmatism, being at least to all appearances quite indifferent to the basal distinction of a metaphysical dualism, the spirit-matter distinction, as well as to many other distinctions which are in solution in this and which accordingly are supposed to have metaphysical ground, is in what sense if in any sense monistic? How far, if at all, does pragmatism deny the distinctions of dualism? Now pragmatism, I submit, is philosophy; it is neither science nor theology. Theology, and with it morality, commonly leans towards an idealistic monism; science, towards a materialistic monism, as is shown in so much recent science-inspired realism; but philosophy, towards an indifferentistic monism. So, once more, in what sense is pragmatism monistic? What is the peculiar meaning of its indifference?

For answer to this question it is important to recognize at once what is, I think, substantially true, but very easily and quite commonly overlooked, that in the history of philosophy most characteristically, that is, in the non-partisan or indifferentist form, monism has been only a corrective of dualism or—better put—a solvent for all of dualism's metaphysical differences, in short a would-be metaphysical peace-maker. So much, possibly, would or should go without saying. Here, however, is the point. Monism has denied or corrected or resolved dualism only as to some particular setting or context, only as to some historic dualism, whether as expressed openly and completely in the form of somebody's outright assertion or as having the labor of its expression divided, as so often in philosophical standpoints, between the idealists of the time and their contemporary realists. Monism, in other words, has been in practise, whatever it may have been in theory or in its own conceit, never anything more or less than relative—in its correction opposing and often undoing

only some traditional dualism and so at the time even clearing the way for dualism in some new guise, under some new system of values, the spirit-matter or ideal-real distinction finding new expression on some other plane. So, for the notable example, was Spinoza's monism a negation of the medieval dualism. After Spinoza that dualism once for all lost caste metaphysically and became only a standpoint or method, as in psychophysical parallelism or—the division of labor again—in intuitional rationalism and empiricism, both of these being rather epistemological than metaphysical in their intent and value. And, the medieval dualism being changed in this way, metaphysically a new dualism came to reign in its stead. The dualistic difference did not die absolutely, but rose to a new level. Spirit and matter, ideal and real, were as opposed as ever, but each with a new content and value. Similarly, to adduce evidence of the same change from another angle, Spinoza's monism was also the undoing of the medieval individual, but, whether Spinoza directly influenced Leibnitz or not, it also, by reducing all individuals as particularistic entities, spiritual or material, in the realm of thought or in the realm of extension, to so many mere modes, equal and co-ordinate, of the one substance, cleared the way for that new individualism, at once vital or dynamic and microcosmic, of which Leibnitz's monadism was a most important early modern exponent.

Nor in any estimate of monism, of any positively historic monism as a corrective or solvent of a traditional dualism, can one afford to forget those many special distinctions which are always in solution, as was suggested above, in the basal general distinction,—such distinctions, for example, as God and nature, good and evil, truth and error, subject and object, soul and body, and, not to attempt the very long list, any of the other distinctions inhering in life's various problems. In the case of each one monism brings a reduction of the difference *as having metaphysical ground*, makes it mere formal standpoint or medium, significant only epistemologically, and forecasts, not the absolute passing of it, but some new rendering of it,—the whole movement, moreover, involving some achievement in experience. So conditioned, experience is creative.

To sum up, then, generally as to dualism and specifically as to any of its distinctions, dualism is always historic, or contextual, and it is resolved by an equally historic monism and the resolving monism, being relative to a particular situation, only mediates between a passing dualism and a new dualism, which, however like in terms, is new in meaning or real content. Again, to indicate clearly the mediation, the one-time real and metaphysical becomes epistemological and only mediate, and expresses, but “phenomenally,” new reality, a new kind of world. Or, to use a phrase quite commonplace

at least in orthodox epistemology, the mediating "forms of experience," which as related to experience are outgrown realities of experience and always harbor some passing dualism reduced or resolved—Kant's forms, for example, space and time and causality, each with its own antinomy or buried dualism—must always lag behind and do always lag behind the real facts or objects of the experience itself. Do such forms have validity for anything but their mediation, their "working" value? Certainly they can not *represent* the reality which they really mean.

But now: In what sense is pragmatism monistic? Pragmatism is monistic in that it sees experience, if I may here so express the matter, as always moving to the resolution of some dualism, of some distinction between formally incongruous things, of some real problem or conflict, and as always, in the process of the resolution, achieving new reality. But pragmatism is also at least equally dualistic. Only pragmatism, as if catching the meaning of dualism in history, refuses to accept dualism as anything but historic and contextual, as ever in any particular context a metaphysical finality, as ever marking the world's fixed structure or composition. For pragmatism, dualism or any of its many distinctions—and perhaps henceforth it were better known, not abstractly, but only through its specific distinctions in real life—is functional rather than merely and finally structural; life, in other words, having its many dualisms, not just ultimately a single dualism. For pragmatism, once more, neither dualism nor monism can be anything but free principles or general motives of all experience, of any complete experience, both of them being always, let me not say merely present, but active in experience, and so being realities of experience in a sense that no static metaphysics could possibly imagine. To the orthodox metaphysicians this may seem to belittle and discredit the meaning of them both most seriously, but surely it does greatly enhance them. The pragmatic view may discredit them as metaphysical "isms," denying them high places in the metaphysicians' synagogue, but—a change well worth while and very timely—it makes them real and vital in every problem of life that ever finds statement and solution. The dualism-monism movement is seen in every question, problem or experiment, however lowly and commonplace, however ordinary and practical, that ever rises in experience and eventually comes to settlement. Already we have found the whole story historically in the medieval metaphysical dualism, the subsequent psychophysical parallelism, and the present-day pragmatic standpoint, but what is thus written large in history, showing a civilization working out a great problem, is only the typical episode of human experience.

It is, furthermore, at least half-way to this appreciation of prag-

matism for realism and idealism each to have found within its own world the supposed difference between their two worlds or say for each to have found the other's world dwelling with fullness of life quite within its own, even as realism has found "matter" active with so different a thing as "mind" or "spirit"; for, to say the least, with such findings the dualism itself necessarily appears to him who will really look in a new light and acquires new value, becoming rather functional than finally structural as to its distinction or difference or, again, as I think can be said also, rather epistemological than metaphysical, and a functional and epistemological dualism quite satisfies pragmatism. With those findings, then, realism and idealism are already virtually pragmatistic, but they are not yet candidly so; they have not yet arrived. In one way or in the other way the prejudice of a singly structural metaphysics still prevents candor and fulfilment or arrival. The necessary indifferentism is still impossible. So, while a critical realism and materialism and an equally possible critical idealism are excellent fuel for pragmatism, they are not and never can be more than good fuel. They must always need the firing. Real pragmatism must be quite indifferentistic; philosophical, to recall what was said above, not theological and moralistic nor yet scientific.

Pragmatism's interest, as is generally known, is not in matter or mind; it is not in sensuous perception or abstract conception; it is not even in *what just is* under any name or in *what is just known* by any faculty; for these interests and many like them obviously are consequent upon a metaphysical dualism implying ultimate singleness and fixity of the universe's structure and so a mind that can be only either receptive or abstract and a real world whose reality must end with its being and being known. To such a dualism, too, monism could come only negatively, only from outside, only as opposition without use or negation without any solution. But dualism and monism have been shown to be quite different and, consistently, human interest, as represented by the new philosophy, is in situations, problems, experiments, solutions, constructions, achievements and the like,—man's business being no longer to have reality or be it or know it or speculate abstractly merely about it, but, because he has it already, to use it and, using it, to achieve more of it. The metaphysical becoming epistemological, the real becoming mediate or instrumental, the "forms" or instruments so acquired valued for their achievement instead of for their representation or mere formal adaptation—this is human experience as pragmatism feels it. And, again, so conditioned, experience is itself real, a real and living thing—so different from that experience just of something—instead of itself doing something—to which the at last passing dualism had

no choice but to condemn us. Perhaps, after all, pragmatism is more a life or a manner of life than a formal and visible or tangible "ism"; but, if so, it need not be less truly a philosophy; nor need less be expected of it.

But, finally, what of pragmatism and metaphysics? I venture to say that pragmatism, while possibly not satisfying any known metaphysician, is, nevertheless, really big with the metaphysical. To speak more boldly than intelligibly, it so nearly identifies experience with reality as to render a metaphysics gratuitous if not also unseemly. So long as reality was substratal and clothed—with apologies for my metaphorical violence—a metaphysics had some point and, properly timed and placed, was not impertinent. Or, to indulge even in another figure, in its superiority to metaphysics pragmatism can hardly be an exception to the old rule, here slightly paraphrased, that one can not have one's metaphysics and eat it too. Simply in pragmatism the metaphysical cake has been absorbed. If dualism and monism in any way pertain to metaphysics, then, since these "isms" have at last come right up into experience as living principles instead of being speculative and formal assertions about the world beneath or behind experience, pragmatism is—only how shall I put it?—certainly not a metaphysics, but metaphysical at every pore, the cake, I suggest, having proved very rich indeed. If pragmatism may be trusted, the metaphysics of many centuries and many peoples has at last begun to identify itself with human life, reality making itself felt immediately in experience, experience being now seen as a sort of "recapitulation" of Christendom's history, and, being thus put to work, the metaphysical, long abused for idleness and unproductiveness, may end by making for us a new world. When reality works in place of phenomenality, when it succeeds the formal institutions of men, these becoming instruments valid only for what they do, creation must ensue. New life in a new world must be at hand. Pragmatism, then, truly may not satisfy any metaphysician, but at least this may be said of pragmatism: As a standpoint, as distinctly not a metaphysics, it must mean, or at least it may mean, man at last deliberately entering upon adventures in the world of reality, and bent, as he sets out, on really and effectively using reality or on putting all that he himself has found or made to the use of reality and so all in good time on enjoying the creative life of reality thus set free in his own life.

The creative life of reality! To appreciate just what this means here one must recall the indifferentism of pragmatism. The creative life of reality can lie only in a constant union of the ideal and the materially real, of spirit and matter. As an "ism" in history, pragmatism, indifferentist pragmatism, following the medieval dualism

and the subsequent parallelism, calls for candid intercourse, for free and constant interchange, between the values of life and its machinery. Thanks to the too-persistent past, civilization is still suffering from the divorce of these, involving a separation of ends and means, of life's ideal purposes and loyalties and its instruments. Doubtless, at least as must appear in retrospect, such a separation was natural during a militaristic and absolutistic social order. It may have had, too, some point during the earlier years or centuries of the succeeding industrial organization of society, when interest in mere conquest still gave sanction to the principle that life's ends justify any means. But, if industrialism and its accompanying democracy are to prove productive, making some contribution to civilization, the separation can not continue. Thus the soldier, destined for another world, has too long been the romantic figure. The mechanic, master of this world and working for results here, must henceforth take first place in romantic interest. Culture and ideality generally have too long stood aloof, idealizing the past and dreaming, however beautifully, of the future, and practical life, machinery its instrument and science its law, has too long been just practical or "efficient." Culture and efficiency, ideality and practicality, life's deep human values and its nowadays wonderfully devised and wonderfully effective instruments must be wedded as never before, state and school and church all so reorganizing themselves as to make the union, in the first place, quite possible and, in the second place, as it is realized, positively effective. Pragmatism, involving as it does the union of ideality and practicality, or spirituality and real life, of values and instruments, would change the present. Eschewing metaphysics, it would itself realize something.

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THE NATURE OF SCIENTIFIC MATTER

SCIENCE has both form and matter. The form of science known as scientific method is concerned with the ways of observation and experimentation, the kinds of classification, the nature and derivation of scientific laws, and the like. It is the machinery which transforms mere fact into scientific knowledge. It has been carefully examined and is discussed in nearly every book on logic. There has been a tacit assumption, moreover, that the form is all there is to science; that it makes no difference what the matter is so long as the form is correct; that, in short, any rubbish can be put into the machine and come out science. The assumption simply is not true. Just as much care has to be taken of the matter of science as of its